THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NIGERIA AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Preamble:

May I express gratitude to the Rector and members of the Centenary Planning Committee for asking me to be the guest lecturer on this very auspicious celebration. The 100 years of an Institution is worth celebrating and it provides an occasion for stocktaking and a look forward. May I, therefore, congratulate the Institution for attaining this enviable age.

The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria

The Church was established in 1846 by a team of missionaries from the Church of Scotland, consisting of people from the West Indies and Scotland. The team was led by Rev. Hope Masterton Waddell. The team also came on the invitation of two Kings of Calabar. On arrival the first congregation of the Church was established at Duke town, Calabar. From this first congregation, the Church began to expand mostly following the Cross River inland. By 1858, twelve years after coming to Calabar, the Church had expanded to become the Presbytery of Biafra of the Church of Scotland. It became the Presbyterian Synod of Biafra in 1921. With continued remarkable growth the Church in 1945 became the Presbyterian Church of Biafra with the synod as its highest court. By 1954, the Presbyterian Church of Biafra had become the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Nigeria. As the Church continued to grow beyond the East and with Nigeria's impending

independence in 1960, the Church in June, 1960, became the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. This followed the completion of the integration onowf the mission churches. In 1985, the Church's highest court-the synod- met and decided to create regional synods with the general assembly as the highest court. This decision was actualized on August 22nd, 1987 when the general assembly was inaugurated at the Duke Town Presbyterian Church Calabar. The late Rev. James Ukaegbu became the first Moderator of the General Assembly. Two synods were created in 1988.

From the establishment of the church in 1846 in Calabar, the church has witnessed tremendous expansion with congregations in every part of Nigeria. At least one congregation is found in every state capital of Nigeria. Also from the initial two synods of the General Assembly, the church now has 10 regional synods with 63 presbyteries and 464 parishes. There are also several mission stations and congregations. The synods with the number of Presbyteries and Parishes in each are shown in the table below:

S/N	SYNOD	No. of Presbyteries	HQ	No. of Parishes
1.	Akwa Synod	5	Uyo	43
2.	Calabar Synod	8	Calabar	58
3.	East Synod	10	Ohafia	62
4.	East Central Synod	7	Abakiliki	50
5.	Mid-East Synod	5	Afikpo	35
6.	Niger Delta Synod	5	Port Harcourt	46
7.	North Synod	6	Abuja	47
8.	South-Central Synod	6	Aba	45
9.	Upper Cross river	6	Ugep	49

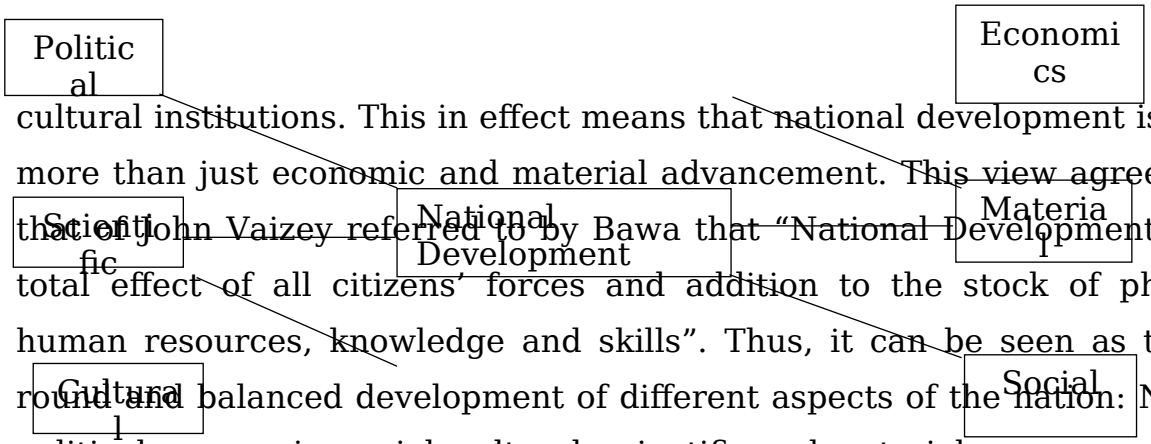
	Synod			
10.	West Synod	5	Yaba, Lagos	29
	Total	**63**		**464**

The Presbyterian church of Nigeria has four layers of administration. These layers are referred to as courts. These courts correspond to the parish where it is known as the Kirk Session, the Presbytery, the Synod and the General Assembly. Each court takes decisions appropriate or corresponding to its level of authority and decision/issues from a lower court can be referred to the next higher court. The General Assembly which is the highest court is the level at which policies governing the church activities are made. In other words, the decision about the general direction and growth of the Church are taken at this level. Its decisions are final and it exercises oversight over all the other courts.

National Development:

The term national development refers to the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens through measures that may be material or social. Material measures include increase in gross domestic product; that is, increase in the monetary values of goods and services; while social measures include increase in, for example, literacy rates, affordable education and availability of health care. The goal of national development is to improve the lives of the citizens in question and encapsulates both growth and change. Thus, any increase that does not positively affect the lives of the citizens is not development. For example; increase in agricultural products without corresponding decrease in the cost of these products cannot be said to be development.

National development according to Bawa (2018) includes the full-growth and expansion of industries, agriculture, education, social, religious and



cultural institutions. This in effect means that national development is much more than just economic and material advancement. This view agrees with that of John Vaizey referred to by Bawa that "National Development is the total effect of all citizens' forces and addition to the stock of physical, human resources, knowledge and skills". Thus, it can be seen as the all-round and balanced development of different aspects of the nation: Namely political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and material.

Facets of National Development

Source Bawa (nd) National Development: Meaning and Problems

Roles of the Presbyterian church of Nigeria in National Development:

The Presbyterian church of Nigeria as a responsible and a responsive faith-based organization has had the interest of its members, would-be and non-members at heart. This must have informed its mission statement which is "to carry the gospel to all parts of Nigeria and beyond through evangelism, discipleship, service delivery and promotion of social righteousness". The Church, thus, has striven and continues to strive to influence the total development of the citizens through human resource development, agricultural development, health care provision, community development,

encouragement of peaceful co-existence and social justice as well as responsible use of the media.

PCN and Human Resource Development

Through its activities in education, the Church has over the years participated in the development of human resources for the nation. They had before the Nigerian Civil War established many schools at each level of education. That is primary, post-primary and tertiary. The Church had in 1895 established the Hope Waddell Training Institution. This was and is still one of the foremost educational institutions in Nigeria. It had produced at different times the persons of repute and competency who have occupied prominent positions of leadership. Among these are Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dr Akanu Ibiam, Sir Dennis Osadebe, Prof. Eni Njoku, Elder Chief Okoi Arikpo, Chief Margaret Ekpo, Dr Alvan Ikoku, Prof. Anya O. Anya, a fellow of the College of Science and a leading contributor to national discourse, Chief K. K. Oyeoku, Barrister Akanimo Asoquo (Chief Legal Officer at the PCN) to mention but a few. In recent times, numerous primary and post-primary institutions have been established by the Parishes, Presbyteries and Synods. But the question remains: How much supervised are these institutions to ensure comparability of standards among them? Who does this supervision? How much of a relationship exist amongst these institutions?

The earliest Presbyterian institutions emphasized entrepreneurship education. Thus, the schools produced graduates who acquired one skill or another. There were also PCN schools dedicated only to the production of qualified teachers and educators. In furtherance of its commitment to education, the Church has established tertiary institutions. ***Two of such institutions are the Hugh Goldie Lay/Theological Institution which is in affiliation*** with the Abia State University and the Essien Ukpabio Presbyterian Theological College which is in affiliation with the University of Calabar. ***Both institutions offer certificate, diploma degree and postgraduate courses*** in Religious Studies, Theology and related areas.

They have been doing marvellous work in producing the needed manpower for the Church. The question, however, can be asked: is it not possible to introduce other management and entrepreneurial courses so as to diversify what is being offered? The Presbyterian Health Institute, Uburu, Ebonyi State is another tertiary institution owned by the Church. This institution trains students in the area of Medical Laboratory, Public Health, Dental Technology, Health Information Management, Nutrition and Dietetics, Hospital Administration and so on. By way of further commitment to human resource development the Church has established the Hope Waddell University which is awaiting license.

PCN and Agricultural Development

As a hitherto rural based Ministry, the PCN has been interested in Agriculture. It had demonstrated this interest with the ownership of farms at Itu and Yakurr, Upper Cross River. It also owns palm estates in many church locations.

PCN and Health Care

The establishment of health facilities has been an integral part of the development of the Church. This may have been as a result of the realization of the fact that healthy parishioners are an asset to the Church. It also arose from its concern for the wellbeing of the body and souls of the citizenry. Thus, the Church had established a number of health care institutions in various parts of Nigeria. Among these are:

1. Mary Slessor Joint Hospital, Itu, Akwa Ibom State
2. Eja Memorial Joint Hospital, Itigidi, Cross River State
3. Presbyterian Tuberculosis and Leprosy Hospital, Mbembe, Obubra, CRS
4. Urban Health Services, Aba, Abia State
5. Presbyterian Mission Hospital, Ivenger, Benue State
6. Rural Improvement Mission, Ikwo, Ebonyi State
7. The Presbyterian Joint Hospital, Uburu, Ebonyi State

8. Ekoli Presbyterian Joint Hospital, Ekoli- Edda Ebonyi State.

The PCN and Social Action

For the purpose of this paper, social action can be seen as covering community development, peace and social justice. The Church exists in a community and what happens therein affects her. Thus, she believes that one of the vehicles by which people can be reached with the gospel is through social action. This is a programme of reaching the needy in the wider society. The Church effects its social intervention programmes through the Presbyterian Community Service and Development Department (PCS & D). This is a fully established faith based organisation funded by the Church, its overseas partner churches and international donor agencies. The PCS & D has four sub-departments through which it carries out its activities. These are:

a) PRESBY-AIDS. This sub-department is responsible for the education of members of Church as well as the public about HIV/AIDS prevention and care as well as other related issues. ***Such other related areas include sex education. The youths need this knowledge in other to develop healthy and moral life competencies.*** Public awareness is crucial in combating the source of HIV/AIDS.
b) Emergency Relief: this sub-department caters for those who have been displaced by any form of disaster- natural or man-made. It does this by assisting them with food, clothing, shelter and/or cash. ***This has been demonstrated by the recent assistance to the IDPs in Nassarawa and Benue States.***
c) Women Empowerment: The intention here is to encourage and empower women to politics and other economic activities. It does this through education and mobilization.

d) The department also trains people in modern agricultural techniques and the application of technology in agriculture. It also provides farm inputs and provides extension services.
e) Peace and Social Justice: the department is usually involved in conflict resolution between individuals, families and communities. It is also involved in ensuring social justice through the enforcement of human rights, equity and fairness. It is a known fact that development occurs where peace exists and peace comes where every section of a community or society is seen to be treated fairly and equitably. It behoves the Church to emphasize peace since the bible in 1 Peter 3:8 (a) urges that we live in harmony with one another and in 3:11 (b) restates that we "must seek peace and pursue it".

The PCN and Media

The media constitutes veritable instruments of communication. This is even more so in these days of multiple print and electronic media- television, radio, e-mail, Facebook, messenger, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, blog and so on. How much of these media is the Church using in the propagation of the gospel and in the dissemination of information about itself? True the Church has an official website. How populated and active is this site? How visible is the Church on the social media? Does the Church have a television or radio station? How often does the Church use the print media to disseminate information about itself? How active is the media team of the Church? These are some of the questions that maybe asked about the Church and the media. This paper may not be able to provide the answers to the questions and many more. It must be said that the visibility of the Church depends to a large extent on its presence in these media.

The PCN and Political Development

The administration of the Church is firmly hinged on sound democratic practices. There is hardly any policy decision of the

Church that is not thoroughly debated and voted upon before adoption and implementation. This is the practice in all the court of the Church. Thus, the Church can be said to be democratic. These decisions are taken without rancour. Any dissent is expressed, noted and accommodated. The Nigerian nation can and should copy from the Church this virtue.

Conclusion:

The Church has done quite well in influencing growth and change in the nation. Its contributions are unquantifiable. The Church as a dynamic organization can continue to grow its influence and thus contribute to the positive development of the nation. In doing this, there are areas that need improvement.

Recommendations

It can be seen from the foregoing that the Church has not fared very well in most areas. It will, therefore, be worth it to make the following recommendations which I think will launch the Church into a position to contribute more positively to the development of Nigeria.

1. The Church should pay more attention to the development of higher education. It is at this level that specialized man-power is produced. The Church, besides, should revise the curriculum of this institute and its sister institution, Essien Ukpabio Theological College, Itu, to include courses which will diversify its offerings such that the graduates from these institutions can be engaged by organizations other than the Church.
2. The gaining of foothold in the major food/agricultural production areas of Benue and Nassarawa States should encourage the Church to think of the establishment of Agricultural food/industrial chains. The Church can leverage on the current Federal Government support for agriculture.

3. Synods should be encouraged to establish health facilities. This can be done in partnership with individuals or with overseas partners.

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